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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of the Meridian (Idaho) Instructional Model which was implemented by a large school district operating with limited funds. Prior to 1981, staff development activities in the district were undertaken on a need basis without any comprehensive plan or approach to the improvement of instruction. Changes in this situation came about partly as a result of intervention by the Idaho State Department of Education which sponsored a program in which districts could send teams of principals and teachers to staff development training sessions to provide them with background and direction for implementing district-wide staff development programs. Through participation in this program, the Meridian school district gradually developed a staff development program and designed the Meridian Instructional Model. Because the model's components are generated from the bottom up, teacher ownership is very high. The model consists of four areas within which teachers promote student learning: (1) establishing a purposeful learning environment; (2) deliberately planning lessons that fit the overall curriculum; (3) focused lesson delivery; and (4) evaluating student progress. A copy of the instructional model is included in the report, as well as forms used in the program. (JD)

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JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2
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"DON'T LET THE LACK OF MONEY LIMIT YOUR VISION: HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM WITH LIMITED RESOURCES"

Presentation to the National Council of States
on Inservice Education
Annual Conference
Orlando, Florida
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SP 030 796

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OUTLINE -- NCSIE PRESENTATION -- ORLAND, FLORIDA

I. Overview of Meridian School District and background of district staff development activity

   A. Rural/Urban setting

   B. Phenomenal growth

   C. Lov tax base resulting in limited financial resources

   D. Activities undertaken independently to "band-aid" instructional improvement needs

II. Process of development of present instructional improvement program

   A. Independent activities undertaken

      1. Staff Development

      2. Development of the Meridian Instructional Model

   B. Staff involvement

      1. Teachers

      2. Building administrators

   C. Partnership with local university

   D. Group processes used to insure active staff involvement

      1. Examination of theory, research and informed practice

      2. Design to insure input from individual classroom teachers

      3. Use of CBAM

   E. Re-examination /reallocation of resources

      1. Financial

      2. Personnel

      3. Community

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   H. Redesign of responsibilities

III. Current status

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OVERVIEW OF THE MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Meridian School District is a suburban area of Boise, Idaho -- the largest city as well as the largest school district in the state. The Boise area has experienced numerous growth spurts in the past twenty years, and much of this growth has taken place in the Meridian School District. Since 1978, the district has added 5 elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school. In addition, many portable classrooms have been constructed for use throughout the district.

When the economic slow down started in 1979, the district was still experiencing growth, and that year approximately 100 new teachers were hired. Meridian was rapidly becoming a very large school district, but still operating as the small rural district it had been. Since 1979, the district has continued to grow, but at a much slower rate until the 1989 school year. An economic boom, as well as people moving from large urban areas to improve their quality of life, brought in a population who want and support quality education. In August of 1990, this growth coupled with an effort to reduce primary class sizes, resulted in the district's hiring of 135 new teachers, numerous aides and many support personnel. Meridian is still considered a rural district; however, it is rapidly moving toward becoming an urban one. It is now the 2nd largest school district in the state.

With the type of growth experience by the district -- family dwellings with almost no commercial industry -- the tax base for school support relies heavily on property tax. The district still has many, many acrea of farm land which is subject to property tax along with farm equipment that is taxed as personal property. To build schools in the State of Idaho, school district must go to the voters and pass bond issues that require 66 2/3% "yes" votes. This has created a huge problem, not only because of the burden placed on property owners, but also because an affirmative vote leaves the districts with a high bond indebtedness. Patrons are not eager to vote for additional buildings, and passing bond issues which require a "super majority" is not an easy task.

A sizable amount of the state's financial resources are designated to education (approximately 80% of the total state budget); however, the major source of monies come from its resources -- namely mining, timber and agriculture -- all three of which are and have been suffering hard times in the market place. In addition, the educational funding formula in the state favors small districts with the smallest ones receiving approximately $10,000 per student vs. Meridian School District which receives a little over $1900 per student. The district's taxing ability and the state funding formula together have placed the district in a "band aid" posture for funding curriculum, supplies, teacher development and school buildings.

The good news is that even though the district is growing at a phenomenal rate, the new growth is comprised of people who are willing to support education. On October 9, 1990, the patrons passed an 11.9 million dollar bond for new schools and additions. Further, the Meridian School District along with 18 other districts that receive similar state funding, is suing the state for equity funding. In addition, a successful lottery has generated money to districts for buildings, and though the district is presently only keeping even, the prospects look good for the future.

The Meridian School District, which twelve years ago, was considered a farm district, has turned into a rapidly growing urban district with high test scores, quality teachers and many students who go on to higher education. While salaries paid in Meridian are only now beginning to become competitive within the state, Meridian has offered benefits which have attracted quality teachers. Two of these are the districts scholarship program and the pro-active staff development program.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Prior to 1981, staff development activities in the Meridian School District were undertaken on a "need" basis, without any comprehensive plan or approach to the improvement of instruction. Changes in this came about partly as a result of intervention of the State Dept. of Education and a program in which district could send "teams" of principals and teachers to staff development training sessions to provide them with background and direction for implementing district-wide staff development programs. The Meridian District took full advantage of this opportunity and sent a team comprised on an elementary and secondary teacher and principal (4 persons total) for training in 1981.

Following the training, the team organized into a district staff development committee with a chairman and three members, and began to plan staff development activities for the district. Their first undertaking was to train building staff development teams (comprised on the building principal and one teacher) in the current research regarding staff development and to enlist these "building teams" as active participants in the district's new staff development program. For the initial year (1982), all activities were undertaken with virtually no budget, and the program relied upon the identification and use of the expertise of the district's staff. Initially, the district staff development committee planned and implemented two days of teacher workshops (during the statewide inservice days) with teachers presenting to their peers.

The staff development committee was expanded the following year; however, it still relied totally upon the district's staff members, all of whom had other primary responsibilites as building

administrators or classroom teachers. A modest budget was made available, and it was used primarily to allow the district to bring in a limited number of speakers and to pay committee members a small honorarium for their committee work. In subsequent years, money was also added to provide limited spending to individual buildings for their staff development activities and to allow the district to begin the acquisition of audio visual and print materials to support the staff development efforts.

In 1984, with the hiring of new superintendent, the district decided that there was need to develop and implement an instructional model. This decision was based upon perceived needs for a clear statement of the district's belief about effective instruction and a pro-active approach to change. Unlike many districts around the country, the Meridian School District did not choose to "adopt" someone's else's model, but rather to begin with the "experts" -- the district's own classroom teachers -- to identify effective instructional practices.

An examination of research and theory regarding instruction was also undertaken at this time to insure that the "model" would have a sound theoretical base. A district/university partnership was formed, and university professors worked closely with a district task force to develop an initial proposal for an instructional model. The proposal was balanced between identified "best practices" and reseach and theory, specifically TESA, ITIP, and the Effective Schools Research.

Since the task force included staff members from each building, these individuals were then used to take the initial proposal back to their peers. Teacher surveys were conducted, and every teacher in the district was given the opportunity to respond to the proposed "model". In addition, every teacher in the district was given the opportunity to identify and prioritize effective instructional practices. The latter validated the work of the task force, and the end result of the entire process was the Meridian Instructional Model (MIM) that was adoped by the school board in the spring of 1986.

It should be emphasized at this point that in joining with Boise State University and in utilizing a process called "The Nominal Group Process or Technique" (see appendix), the district provided every certificated staff member with the opportunity to become involved with the design of the instructional model that would eventually dictate the standard for the district's instruction. In developing the Meridian Instructional Model (MIM), a model with components generated from the bottom, up, rather than adopted by the district trustees and administration and implemented from the top, down, teacher ownership in the model was very high. This was a terrific "plus" in the implementation of the model.

In 1987-88, training modules were designed and district teachers were selected to act as MIM trainers. In the past three years, each building has received training on one strand of the Model with the

goal of completing the entire training cycle in four years. Teachers new to the district have been given the training their building had received previously. In addition to this training, the district has emphasized the four strands of the Model at the fall workshops, and each individual building has been charged with the responsibility to design and implement building level staff development programs which further enhance the strand of the Model for which they are responsible each year.

The Meridian Instructional Model (MIM) now provides the base for instructional improvement, and all activities relate to the Model. In the past few years, the district (in conjunction with Boise State University) has offered a variety of workshops and training session on the Meridian Instructional Model and its componsents. Other university classes (expanded now to utilize the resources of other higher education institutions in the area), outside speakers, building-level development, district-wide training, etc. all draw upon MIM. Annual assessments of staff wants/needs are conducted and evaluation is undertaken on each activity. The results from all of these assessments are used in future planning.

Staff involvement in instruction improvement continues to be very high. The district staff development committee is comprised of teachers and building administrators who plan and implement the various staff development activities. The committee chairman, also a building principal, provides leadership and oversight for the district activities. Committee members and MIM trainers receive a modest supplemental salary, and the committee is given limited released time for committee work.

With the commitment to instructional improvement activities on a broad scale, it became evident that there was one further component necessary for full implementation of an effective instructional improvement program. This component was improvement in the districts supervision and evaluation of staff members. In 1989-90, a new supervision/evaluation program predicated upon the Meridian Instructional Model (MIM) and designed by a committee of teachers and administrators, was implemented. Staff members are now held accountable for the Model's components, which they themselves identified as the most important elements in effective instruction.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Meridian School District's staff development program is comprehensive in nature, and includes training for classified and certified personnel. Specific programs for teachers, administrators, bus drivers, cooks, custodians, library assistants, teaching assistants and computer aides have been implemented. A budget of $93,854.00 (exclusive of the district scholarship program) is available for the 1990-91 school year, and while this is a vast improvement from the initial years of little or no budget, it still

represents much less than 1% of the district's total budget of $36,620,093.00.

FUTURE NEEDS/PLANS

1990 marks the ninth year in which the Meridian School District has been developing and implementing a comprehensive staff development program. Constant evaluation and assessment of activities, programs, etc. has insured that the program remains vital, current and relevant; however, the district has recognized that the "model" which undergirds its efforts must also be up-to-date and in correlation with the most current research on instruction. For this reason, the district is presently undertaking the re-evaluation of the Meridian Instructional Model (MIM) to make certain that its delineation of the elements of effective instruction is supported by current theory and research.

The Meridian School District will again work in conjunction with Boise State University to examine and revise the instructional model. This process will take place during the current school year, and once again, the district will look to its teachers, the experts, to provide the driving force in this process. Appropriate revisions in the instructional improvement process will follow completion of the revision of the Meridian Instructional Model (MIM).

GENERAL DISTRICT GOALS

— To equip each student with the academic tools necessary to succeed in scholastic and vocational endeavors.
—To build foundations for good individual, community and corporate citizenship.
— To help each student develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, moraliy and physically.
— To offer courses and programs which address the needs of students with physical or mental handicaps.
— To encourage self-respect, respect for others and pride in the school and community.
— To cultivate in each student an eagerness for knowledge which will fuel life-long learning.
— To adapt educational processes to keep pace with our rapidly changing society.
— To utilize teaching methods and materials that most effectively individualize the learning process.
— To encourage community participation in all school activities, including recreation, music, drama, art, and the development and formulation of school curricula and policy.
— To recruit fully qualified personnel and provide good work conditions, good compensation, staff development programs, and personnel policies that encourage the retention and growth of the very best educators.

SHORT AND LONG RANGE PLANS

The following are summary highlights of 1989 planning committee reports. Complete reports are available at the District office.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Our primary goal, district-wide, is to provide staff and other support which will allow us to meet accreditation standards. A secondary goal is to take steps to improve retention at both elementary and secondary levels.

Short term goals, then, include the addition of teachers needed to meet accreditation and a fourth curriculum coordinator in science. Secondary libraries need their already budgeted increase in order to reach accreditation standards; elementary libraries also need additional funds. We support the new library selection/materials reconsideration policy, and a double textbook adoption process for language arts and social studies that will help us get back on our schedule for the selection and purchase of textbooks.

We will continue our focus upon at-risk students district-wide. We recommend adding counselors at the elementary level, continuation of the present summer school program, piloting a basic skills computer lab for underachievers, and a September 1990 implementation of an alternative school.

Long range goals are meant to extend and enhance immediate goals. We urge an increase in remedial reading and math help for elementary students who need more assistance, and recognize a need for additional computer access for both students and teachers. In order to deal with growth pressures we need to review, update and form recommendations regarding such alternate scheduling strategies as zero hour periods and trimester programs.

Music enriches the lives of listeners as well as performers; we urge the implementation of an orchestra program.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

For the upcoming year we recommend a continuation of the Meridian Instructional Model activities for staff development, develop and implement a two year training program for elementary library aides, a day of inservice and curriculum training for new teachers, and a compensated-time program for the delivery of MIM modules to individual school buildings. The district should continue to provide administrative inservice support through the state Project Leadership program and through the district's own administrative staff development programs.

In the long term we recommend ongoing review of the Meridian Instructional Model, revision as appropriate, and additional programs such as expansion of peer coaching programs and a district-wide monitoring program for beginning teachers.

The district will continue to revise and update the district policy manual and will develop a district personnel procedures manual.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Most immediate goals concern the continuation of proven programs, including recognitions, publications, maintaining community awareness and correspondence. Appropriate recognition will be given to the Teacher of the Year and a selected Monthly Employee. Logo pins will be distributed to new employees. This next year's Spotlight-On-Schools will emphasize a Centennial theme; regular correspondence will acknowledge significant life events and recognize participation in district activities. A minimum of three issues of Outlook magazine will be distributed to district patrons.

Additional short term goals are to develop and display a district Mission Statement, to maintain and distribute an all-district monthly calendar, and to recognize teachers of the year with a special plaque at the district office.

Within the next five years this committee would like to see a Speaker's Bureau established. A Parent/Teacher Survey conducted, a Partners in Education program implemented, and a Mission Statement displayed in all schools. The addition of a full-time Public Relations Coordinator to the district staff would assist in the development of these and other programs.

Meridian Instructional Model Project
Edmundson, Burbank, Herrig
Fall, 1985

THE NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

Preparation

The opening statement:

1. a c[illegible]al and warm welcome
2. a [illegible]of the importance of the group task
3. cl[illegible]ation of the importance of each member's contribution
4. in[illegible]ation of the use or purpose of the meeting's results

Step 1

Silent generation of ideas in writing

1. present the question to the group in written form
2. verbally read the question
3. direct the group to write ideas in brief phrases or statements
4. ask the group to work silently and independently
5. model good group behavior

Step 2

Round-robin recording of ideas

1. go around the group and ask for one idea from one member at a time
2. write the idea of a group member on the chart
3. duplicate ideas need not be recorded
4. record ideas as rapidly as possible--use group member's words
5. keep all ideas visible by posting completed sheets

Step 3

Serial discussion for clarification

1. define the role of the step as clarification
2. pace the group to avoid undue argumentation or neglect of some items
3. remember purpose is not resolving differences of opinion, but to disclose thinking and analysis

NOTE: If you have a large group (more than 15) or a long list, you may ask the group which items they need to have clarified and discuss only those items.

Step 4

Preliminary vote on item importance

1. explain purpose: to have the judgment of each group member concerning the most important ideas on the list
2. give directions for process: take 5-7 index cards; choose 5-7 most important ideas, writing one idea on each card and numbering each idea; rank each of the 5-7 items by selecting the card that is most important, number it 5 or 7, then the most important of the remaining cards, etc., until all are numbered
3. record rankings on a ballot sheet

JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2
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SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

CLASSIFICATION

FIRST, SECOND and THIRD YEAR TEACHERS (non-continuing)	Formal evaluation once each semester. Written evaluations due in the District Office Dec. 1 and April 1.
CONTINUING CONTRACT TEACHERS (FOUR OR MORE YEARS IN DISTRICT)	Formal evaluation once each year unless teacher is on an Expanded Growth Plan. Written evaluation to District Office by May 1. Written evaluation to District Office by March 1 if on probation.

Each formal evaluation shall be based upon a supervisory process which includes a minimum of 2 informal and 1 formal classroom observations defined as follows:

informal: no pre/post conference; written feedback to the teacher

formal: pre/post conference; observation covers entire lesson sequence (for date/time of observation)

• • • • • • • •

At any time that a teacher's performance is found to be unsatisfactory by the supervising principal, the principal will notify the teacher in writing. Assistance will be provided through the use of an Expanded Growth Plan, an Intensified Growth Cycle, or Probation.

Staff members may be placed on Expanded Growth Plans at any time during the course of the year.

A Intensified Growth Team is only necessary if a teacher is in need of intense assistance and/or has been placed on the Intensified Growth Cycle or Probation.

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF TEACHERS - TIMELINE

	ACTIVITY	Required Completion Date
1.	Teachers complete Professional Growth Plan and conference with the principal.	September 30
2.	First written evaluation on each non-continuing contract teacher. Conference with teacher. Employer and employee sign the evaluation. Copies to employee, principal and appropriate Director.	December 1
3.	Following any evaluation, institute Expanded Growth Plan (at appropriate level) for any non-continuing contact employee not meeting desired standards.	
4.	Follow-up evaluation must be completed for any continuing contract employee on probation. Conference with employee concerning the evaluation. Recommendation: re-employ; dismiss or continuation of probation.	March 1
5.	Second written evaluation on each non-continuing contract teacher. Conference with the teacher. Employer and employee sign the evaluation. Copies to employee, principal and appropriate Director.	April 1
6.	See #3 above.	
7.	Evaluations on continuing contract employees shall be completed. A conference will be held between the evaluator and the employee to discuss the written evaluation. Written evaluation must be signed by the employee and the evaluator. Copies to: Employee, Principal, appropriate Director.	May 1
8.	Following any evaluation, institute an Expanded Growth Plan (at appropriate level) for any continuing contract employee not meeting desired standards.	

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN

NAME:_____ SCHOOL:_____

SCHOOL YEAR:_____ GRADE/SUBJECT:_____

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION
District:		
Building		

RESOURCES: (What do I need to accomplish these activities? Who is responsible for obtaining resources? How will my evaluator help?)

TIMELINE: (When do I expect to complete my goals? When will future meetings with my evaluator take place?)

During this school year if you plan to participate on school or school district committees, engage in filed-related studies or other professional activities, please describe below.

Teacher's Signature _____ Date _____

Evaluator's Signature _____ Date _____

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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN SUMMARY

NAME:_____ SCHOOL:_____

SCHOOL YEAR:_____

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS: (To be completed and submitted to evaluator prior to the final written evaluation. Include an end-of-evaluation period assessment of your plan: whether your goals have been satisfactorily met, future plans, etc.)

During this school year if you have participated on school or school district committees, received honors, engaged in field-related studies or other professional activities, please describe below.

_____ _____

Teacher's Signature Date

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MID-YEAR EVALUATION REPORT

TEACHER:_____ BUILDING:_____

OBSERVATION PERIOD THAT
IS COVERED BY THIS REPORT:_____

I. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT -

II. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION -

III. LESSON DELIVERY -

IV. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES -

V. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS -

VI. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND RESPONSIBILITIES -

COMMENDATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS -

Evaluator's Signature _____ Date _____

I understand that: I will receive one copy of this report; one copy will be filed in the principal's office; and one copy will be filed in the District Administration Office. Signing this report does not imply agreement, but it indicates that the information has been discussed.

Teacher's Signature _____ Date _____

TEACHER COMMENTS (optional):

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION - MERIDIAN INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL

I. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - The teacher establishes a purposeful learning environment by:

- recognizing variation in skill level;
- providing a variety of materials and experiences;
- demonstrating confidence in students' abilities;
- recognizing effort and acknowledging success;
- responding appropriately to student needs;
- maintaining a secure and orderly environment;
- helping students develop a sense of belonging;
- stating clear academic goals and expectations;
- developing clear formal and informal rules for expected behavior;
- demonstrating personal concern for students;
- promoting high expectations.

II. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION - The teacher deliberately plans lessons by:

- selecting appropriate objectives consistent with district curriculum;
- selecting appropriate objectives consistent with students' developmental levels;
- matching teaching activities to objectives selected;
- choosing instructional resources which are consistent with objectives;
- assessing students' individual needs and learning styles;
- designing alternative learning opportunities to accommodate differences in students;
- designing an evaluation procedure to measure attainment of objectives.

III. LESSON DELIVERY - The teacher delivers lessons by:

- focusing student attention on the lesson;
- initiating student interest and/or excitement in the lesson;
- fostering motivation in students;
- modeling and demonstrating;
- utilizing appropriate questioning techniques;
- giving clear and concise explanations;
- providing positive, specific and timely feedback to student responses;
- making equitable and thoughtful responses to student inquiries;
- communicating positive expectations for all students;
- sharing honest and specific praise;
- providing opportunities for practice;
- monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction accordingly;
- spending adequate time on introductory lessons or units;
- promoting individual success;
- maximizing instructional time;
- employing effective techniques of classroom management;
- utilizing various groupings when appropriate to facilitate learning.

IV. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES - The teacher evaluates progress by:

- conducting formative (growth oriented) and summative (mastery check) evaluations;
- measuring attainment of instructional objectives selected for each lesson;
- developing and using criterion referenced tests when appropriate;
- using valid, reliable and practical measurement instruments;
- using varied measurement tools: tests (pre and post tests, objective and essay tests), verbal discussion, demonstration of learning, teacher observation;
- giving timely feedback about evaluation to students.

RELATED AREAS

VI. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS - The teacher demonstrates appropriate interpersonal relationships by:

- interacting and communicating effectively with students, parents and colleagues;
- contributing to the improvement of the school and district by presenting suggestions/criticisms in a positive manner;
- providing a positive role model for students;
- maintaining confidentiality.

VII. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND RESPONSIBILITIES - The teacher demonstrates growth and responsibility by:

- staying current in methodology of content taught;
- setting appropriate goals for growth;
- demonstrating progress in completing professional growth requirements;
- planning for and engaging in professional development;
- performing assigned duties;
- complying with school and district policies;
- demonstrating punctuality;
- completing reports, etc. in a timely manner.

The following area(s) require intensive development:

Date placed on EXPANDED GROWTH PLAN_____

Level of Plan:

I. Performance Improvement Plan_____

II. Intensified Growth Cycle_____

III. Probation_____

_____ _____

Evaluator's Signature Teacher's Signature

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EXPANDED GROWTH PLANS

Any areas of deficiency require a written growth plan

I. Building Level -- PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Specific areas of deficiency -- Specific written plan worked out between teacher and building principal

II. District Level -- INTENSIFIED GROWTH CYCLE

Written communication with district -- Assistance in forming supervisory team which includes building principal, district office person, another principal

III. Probationary Cycle --PROBATION

Determined by the Board of Trustees upon recommendation of the supervising administrator

Recommendation for probation includes: terms, conditions, assistance to be given, and length of probationary period.